ONE MINUTE

With bhagavad, bhAgavata AcArya anugraham, aDiyEn is thinking of writing simple "One Minute" articles in this Facebook bhAgavata gOshti. Today, we start with the first article. Any mistake/error, please excuse aDiyEn.

prapannAd anyEshAm na diSati mukundO nija padam

svAmi dEsikan declares in Srimad rahasya traya sAram that Lord Sriman nArAyaNA does not show His lotus feet [to perform nithya (eternal) kaimkaryam] without prapatti (total unconditional surrender) as a vyAjam (simple excuse).

In SrIvaishNava sampradAyam, moksham is the ultimate reward one can attain, and it is the release from samsAram (bondage of birth and death cycle). To reach that parama purushArtam (ultimate reward) there are only two sAdanams (means), namely bhakthi (deep devotion) and prapatti, out of which, prapatti is the only mArgam (route) that can be followed by everyone, easily.

Remember English alphabets - AEIOU, the concept of prapatti is as simple as that

A - All the rewards including moksham prapatti will confer

E - Easy to perform

I - Immediate results

O - Only once needs to be done

U - Universal, that is everyone can do it

Lord expects this simple excuse, prapatti from us, to write off all of our accumulated sins and grant us the mOksham.

ONE MINUTE – 02

The three Rs

SrI vaishNava philosophy (siddhantham) can be summarized with three Rs, namely Reality (tattvam), Route (hitham) and Rewards (purushArtam). This can be easily compared to our daily life analogy – Where are you, where you want to go, and how to get there?

Reality (tattvam) - We are immersed in a deep cycle of infinite birth and deaths (samsAram). One who has the power to release us from this jail, is the same one who has locked up us here. It is ridiculous to beg to another cellmate to release us, because simply he is also inside the jail and suffering like us. So, tattvam, clearly distinguishes who is inside and who is outside this jail. All the animate and inanimate

things are inside this bondage and Lord Sriman nArAyaNA , is the only one outside, who is waiting with the key to unlock us up.

Rewards (parama purushArtam), is none other than mOksham, SrIvaikuntam, parama padam, the ultimate bliss, where there is no clock. The happiness there is infinite, boundless and never reducing. On the contrary, the happiness on earth and other worlds (lokhAs) are controlled by an expiry date. The aim of our individual souls (AthmAs) is to reach this final destination, mOksham. Remember the ET movie, where it says “ET go home”, our AthmA is craving like that to go to mOksham.

Route (hitham). No need to discover anything new, since all possible routes are already dealt extensively in our literature. It can be summed up as four - Action (karma), Intelligence (janana), devotion (bhakthi), and total surrender (prapatti). The first two (karma, janna) are just a means to lead you into one of the last two (bhakthi or prapatti).

ONE MINUTE – 03

Which is bigger, brahmA or karmA ?

mOksham is different from svargam or brahma logam; mOksham is permanent and others are not. Srutis cherish “na ca punarA vartate na ca punarA vartate,” only to SrIvaikuntam. It means that one who goes there never comes back. Either through bhakthi or prapatti, the liberated souls (mukthAs) shed all their karmAs, reach there and never born again. On the contrary, those who are on earth, svargam, and brahma logam, etc. are still dictated by their karma and so are entrenched deep in the cycle of birth and death (samsAram).

Let us make this simple. Draw an imaginary horizontal line and call it as viraja nadhi (river virajA). Anything above is called SrIvaikuntam, the permanent world. There everything is pristine, holy and associated with only satva gunAs. You will see nithyasooris (eternals) like anantha, garuda, vishavaksenar and many of our forefathers and AcAryAs who have attained mukthi. These eternals and liberated souls never come below viraja river based on karma, but can be commanded by bhagavAn to descend down for a specific purpose.

Anything below virajA river is called prapanjam. Creation, sustenance and destruction (srushti, sthithi and samhAram) happens only to this.Infinite number of universes are created and destroyed infinite number of times. Remember Carl Sagan used to say “billions and billions of stars”. Each of these universes is ruled by a brahmA and the total number of brahmAs are also infinite. brahmA is merely a position - just like president, secretary - and does not refer always to any single person. You can become a brahma and so do I, if we accumulate enough merits (punyams). That position is time-stamped and on the expiry date, brahmA has to relinquish the title.

During the great deluge (prAkrita pralyam), Lord SrIman nArAyaNA compresses all the universes which contains the individual souls (AthmAs) and primordial matter (prakriti) into a dot. No brahmA there, no sivA there and no humans are there. The souls remain without any name (namA) or form (rupA), but their account ledger of merits and sins (punya papams) are not forgotten. It is maintained by none other than Lord Sriman nArAyaNA, alone. During that time, there is no brahmA, but your karmA is still very much intact.

brahmA may come and go, but your karmA is stronger and longer than brahmA.

ONE MINUTE – 04

Attaining moksham is every soul's right

“Vaikuntham puguvathum maNNavar vidiyE,” svAmi nammAzhvAr claims in tiruvOimozhi. Every soul is destined to reach mOksham, eventually. To reach mOksham and stay there permanently and enjoy boundless, endless, uninterrupted happiness (paripoorna brammAnubhavam) is every soul’s right. If that is so, how come we are still dwelling in mundane chores that swirl through our emotions, health, and enjoyment, etc. One may ask, how come, I am not getting that everlasting bliss, rather he would ask, tell me what should I do to achieve that? Answer to that question is what everyone may be interested in.

Body and Soul are different -- First we need to understand that our soul (AthmA) is different from the body (sarEram). Soul never dies, but body does. Just like, we put on different clothing, the soul puts on different bodies in each life (janmA). The type of clothing is determined by our karmA. karmA is nothing but a a long ledger that accounts our good deeds (punyam) and sins (pApam) across our infinite births. Until that ledger is zeroed out, there is no liberation. Body is the doer, but in reality soul is the enjoyer or payer.

Individual souls are smart -- Our soul is as knowledgeable and lustrous like bhgavAn's, but it is completely surrounded by dirt (pApam) and so it couldn't shine. It does not need any external new knowledge (jnAnam), but rather what it needs is through cleaning and polishing. Once that is done, the soul is ready to glitter.

Simple parable -- Svami Desika gives a nice parable. Once a king went for hunting and he took his wife and baby along with him. During his stay in the forest, somehow the baby was lost in the thick woods and they never found the baby. The King returned to his palace and continued his life for several years without the lost baby. Incidentally, the baby was found by a hunter and he took it home and brought him up. The prince not knowing anything about his birth and real parents lived with hunters, like one among them. He picked up the habits, style, and attitude just like other hunters. One day, a King's minister came to that forest and accidentally saw this boy. This boy looked different from others, but his actions were same like a hunter. The minister immediately realized the boy was none other than the lost prince. When the minister approached little boy and told him about his past, and advised him that he is really a prince, a future king and he does not belong to hunters clan. Once this truth is known, that prince immediately gave up everything ran to the palace to claim his throne.

Our souls are similar to this lost and wandering prince. We are immersed deeply in cheap unstable and temporary pleasures on earth, without knowing that our father is Lord SrIman nArAyaNA, and He is waiting with the kingdom (mOksha sAmrAjyam). Once if we recognize that we don't belong to this place, we will immediately look for a way to reach there, the mOksham.

ONE MINUTE – 05

Determine first, what is best (sAra nishkarsham)

Human life is short and the obstacles are huge; one can't master all methods, acquire knowledge and decide on the best. So, the proper guide and discriminative knowledge is inevitable to achieve the end result. We start with two terms, pramEyam, the object of knowledge and pramANam, the source that shows the object. PramEyam deals with what we should know about and pramANAm helps to understand that, clearly, unambiguously, and without alteration.

The highest pramEyam is the bhagavAn (Lord). To understand Him, three types of pramANAs exist – prathyaksham, anumAnam, and sabdham. Prathyaksham means direct perceptive knowledge, like what we see, hear etc. But they can deceive us easily. Apple juice may taste nicely like ripened apple on the

tongue, but it may be from artificial juice powder, which has nothing to do with real apples! Magic shows we see on TV, where they make believe “disappearance of Statue of Liberty” etc., where our eyes deceive us. So prathyaksham is not a reliable indicator.

anumAnam is deductive knowledge. A conclusion is derived from known data; but it is subjected to the person’s inferential capacity. Let us say that A equals to B, and B equals to C, then A should be equal to C. Extending the same logic in a case where, the mother loves the son, son loves his wife, but how come mother-in-law, in some instances, doesn’t love the daughter-in-law? So, anumAnam is also not reliable.

Lastly, sabdham is the verbal testimony, which is vedAs or sruthi. They are the only pramANA that has no bias or flaws because it is apaurusheyam (anonymous). What we should do and should not do is determined and dictated by sAstrAs. These sAstrAs has been passed to us thousands of years back by alien rishis and is far superior to any earthly scriptures. So the study of vedAs becomes inevitable to attain the ultimate rewards.

Even in vedAs, the bulky earlier parts, deals with rites and sacrifices geared towards worldly pleasures on earth or in celestial worlds like svargam. Those rewards are incomplete, inconsistent, intermittent and temporary. Latter part vedAs like Upanishad are superior to earlier parts. But even in that, where realization of one’s soul etc. is dealt are definitely less desirable compared to the knowledge about the absolute Lord and how to attain and enjoy Him.

In summary, the parts of the vedAs which describe who the ultimate God is and how to reach Him is the crucial knowledge one should aspire for. That essence is found in rahasya trayam (the three secrets or mysteries). It consists of three mantrAs - ashtAksharam, dvayam and charama slokam (eight lettered mantra, two part mantra and last sloka). They are the epitome of truth and reality and indispensable source and guide for salvation.

This body soul relation (sarIra sarIrIbhaAvam) has three underpinning characteristics. Adheya/AdhAra (supported / supporter), niyAmya /niyAmaka (controlled/controller), seshA/seshI (owned/owner). Bhagavad rAmAnujA describe this relation as “prutak sidhi anarha Aadhaara Aadheya bhAva: niyantru niyAmya bhAva: Sehsi Sesha bhAvancha."

This can be remembered easily as SCO (Supports, controls, owns) principle. brammam supports, controls and owns all the chetanA, achetanAs. In turn, these are all supported, controlled and owned by Him. All things can't exist without Him and that is why they are called bhagavAn's body. Bhagavan supports all of these during their existence (svarUpam), continuance (sthithi) and activity (paravritti) at His own will.

This sarIra athma bhAvam, the crown jewel of viSishtAdvatitam, is the significant and unique doctrine, not found in other religions (pradhAna prati tantram).

ONE MINUTE - 06

Body and soul relation

The distinctive concept of viSishtAdvaitA

A key principle in Hindu philosophy is the cause and effect of one's action or deed called "karmA". Birth and death cycle (smasArA), the reincarnation continues only because of karmA. pramANAs (authoritative texts) point out that the soul (sarirI) never dies, but only the body (sariram) does. Just like shedding old clothing and putting on a new one, the soul takes different bodies, as a result of its karmA.

The unique feature in viSishTAdvaita (qualified advaitA) philosophy is how the body-soul relation is applied to sentient (chetanA), non-sentient (achetanA) and IsvarA (lord). We all have a body and an individual soul inside. Both our body and soul combined, form the body for the bhagavAn's soul. That is, both sentient and non-sentient form an inseparable (aprthaksiddhi) body for the bhagavAn. Think of this example – Moon is circling the earth at the center. But earth and the moon both are circling the Sun, which is at the center.

Scriptures say, there is only one Brammam and no second to that. But that single brammam contain all the individual sentient and non-sentient things as its inseparable part. Svami dESikA summarizes "asesha chitAchit prakAram brahmam ekamEva tattvam," that is brammam qualified by sentient and non-sentient aspects, is the only reality. This is based on ghataka sruthi (linking testimony) which obviously finds unity in diversity. Bhagavad rAmAnuja stresses that the prastAna treya (the three courses) – upanishads, bhagavad gitA, bramma sutrA – should be interpreted in this approach only. All other methods may violate the internal consistency and comprehension of various pramANAs.

ONE MINUTE 07

“I” means what? body, soul or both?

Today, aDiyEn will explain a little more detail on body-soul relation because it is the lynch pin of SrIvaishNavam, and understanding is critical to view everything in proper perspective. viSishtAdvaita siddhAntham (qualified advaita philosophy) is firmly rooted on sArIraka sAstram (body soul relation). Lord SrIman nArAyaNA is the only para brahmam (super soul) and all the sentient and non-sentient (chetanA and achetanA) things are His body. Here, we will explain what a body means!

We all have a body (sarIram) and a soul (athmA) inside. As long as the soul stays inside, the body is said to be alive. Once the soul leaves at death, body is buried or burnt. Soul is the one which is knowledgeable and the body is non-sentient. The individual soul is called “knowledge form” (jnAtrutvam). The soul holds our body, controls and owns it. This relation is obvious. My soul is not controlling your body or holding it, etc. So the relation between an individual soul and a body is so exclusive.

Now let us take it to the next step. Lord has a soul, which is super in all aspects. Lord’s soul is described as full of ultimate bliss (Anandam). He also has a body. The body what He takes in avatArams like rAma, krishNa etc. and the idol form (divya mangala tirumEni) in temples etc. is one type. But all the sentient and non-sentient things all form a body for Him. Because every single thing in the universe is supported, controlled and owned by Him. Whenever it follows the relation “SCO – Support,Control, Own”, there exists a soul-body relation. “nialai tanta thAraganAy niyamikkum iRaivanumAy ilathu onRu enA vakai ellam tanatu ennum enthaiyumAy”, says svAmi deSikA about this three criterion

So we all have a body; and a soul which supports, controls and owns it. Similarly Lord has a soul; the body for him, everything else. He supports controls and owns everything else. This philosophy is very crucial in understanding our pramANAs. In many places when the sAstrAs refer a person it may mean multiple things.

For example, if I say, “Rama come here”, I mean both Rama’s soul and his body together. I don’t call them separately, “Rama’s soul come here, Rama’s hand, legs come here”. Next, when I say “Rama is 6 feet tall”, it refers to the body, because soul is atomic in nature. When I say “Rama has done all good deeds (punyam)”, it refers only to Rama’s soul because all merits and sins (punya pApams) accounted

only to soul. Now you know why sAstrAs are so confusing and why there are various interpretations, because it may refer to soul, body or both depending on the context.

The key word here is “context”. In fact, one of the greatest achievements of bhagavad rAmanuja is to explain properly, everything with respect to the context. Without contextual approach, same word may mean exactly opposite of what one intends to say!

In summary, whatever the word you refer to, it refers to Lord SrIman nArAyaNA implicitly, because he is the soul inside of everything. When Sruthi says, “brahma nArAyaNA sivaScha nArAyaNA SakraScha nArAyaNA”, now you know what it means!

ONE MINUTE 08

What is in it for me by being slave to the Lord?

The viSishtadvaita siddhantham (qualified advaita philosophy) explains the sArIraka sAstram (body-soul relation) as everything in the universe as the body to bhagavAn. nammAzhvAr put this concisely in tiruvOimozhi as “udal misai uyir ena kaRantu engum parantu uLan”. Just how the soul (athmA) dwells inside an individual body (sarIram), Lord (paramAtmA) dwells inside this universe (prapanjam). Whole universe and its contents, both sentient and non-sentient (chetana achetanams) are the body for the Lord.

This body-soul relation explained earlier through SCO – Supports, Controls and Owns – principle is analyzed today from the chetanA’s (individual soul’s) perspective. The individual souls’ (chetanAs) dependency of the bhagavAn is summarized through three major criterions.

1. Jeevan is anayadhAran. That is he is being supported by no one, other than Lord.
2. Jeevan is ananyaprayOjanan. That is he useful to no one, other than to Lord.
3. Jeevan is ananyasaraNan. That is he can’t take refuge to no one, other than Lord

By being supported, controlled and live only for the benefit of the Lord, the question arises then, what is the benefit for the chetanA in this arrangement? Svami deSika answers these in SrImad rhasya traya sAram.

Lord's auspicious qualities (tirukkalyAna guNangaL) are inseparable from Him. Jeevans also attain this nature (svarUpA) because they are also inseparable from Him. By being slave to the Lord he understands what the ultimate reward (purushArttam) is. He develops a taste towards that reward. By keeping the Lord as his supporter, controller and master, he understands (jnAnam) that both the means and ends (upAyam and upEyam) are Lord only and the Lord doesn't expect anything to be his means and ends. If bhagavAn is the route and reward, then the chetanA has no purpose of existence other than merely serve the Lord. These intricate meanings are found in three mysteries (rahasya threyam) in a subtle way and we can discuss them later.

In summary, what is in it for the chetanA to accept the Lord as his supporter, master and savior and inseparable from Him? Simple, he has no other choice. This relation is irrevocably true in all the time, space and matter (sarva deSa, sarva kAla, sarva avasthai). So, let the chetanA better find what is real enjoyment and attain it.

ONE MINUTE – 09

SEshatvam, dAstvam and pAratantriyam

The three mysteries or secrets (rahasya treyam) enlighten that the bhagavAn is the supporter, controller and owner of all the chEtanA (sentient) and achEtanA (non-sentient) in all the prapanjam (universe). These three mantrAs instruct that Lord SrIman nArAyaNA is the master and everything else exists only for Him.

Lord is the yejamAnar (master), which is common for both chEtanA and achEtanA. He is the SEshi (master), the chetnA and achetnA are SEshans (slaves). But there is a distinction between chEtanAs and achEtanAs in the capacity. ChEtanAs are the only one who possesses jnAnam (knowledge) and with this jnAnam, they could perform the kaimkaryam (service) and make the bhagavaAn happy. The chEtanA can act as a dAsa and perform kaimkaryam and bhagavAn as a svAmi can accept them. This capability of dAstvam (servitude) is so unique only to chEtanAs. Lord is the supersoul and He does not have to perfro mkaimkaryam, because He is the boss and achEtanAs have no jnAnam and they can't perform. So the word kaimkaryam is so exclusive only to chetanAs.

This dAsatvam is an intricate and extremely essential quality of a SrIvaishNavan. AzhvArs and AcAryAs in many, many instances emphasized this great quality. When we recite and contemplate on these three rahaysya mantrAs, we should concentrate and remember the dAsatvam. "aDiyEn rAmAnuja dAsan" is the key phrase by which a true SrIvaishNavan identifies himself.

Let us look at another concept commonly used in SrIvaishNavam - svatantrA and pAratantrA. Lord is called svatantran, because He is the only one who is completely free and naturally (svAbhAvika) independent. We also have a little freedom. Our independence, whatever the iota we may have, is not natural, but it is granted by the Lord. Sruthi says, “sthree prAyam idharam jagat” means Lord is the only purushan (male) and the rest are sthree (female), from the aspect of freedom.

The terms pAratantriyam, SEshatvam and dAsatvam have slightly different shades of meanings. dAsatvam is performance of kaimkaryam. SEshatvam means the ability to serve. When the master asks to do a job, the SEshan may or may not do it, but paratantriyan will definitely do it, because has no independence or free will. In SrImad vAlmIki rAmAyaNam, LakshmaNA is a SEshan. He refused to listen to Lord rAmA’s word and accompanied him to the forest. On the other hand, bharatA is a paratantrian. He just listened whatever rAmA told. The key here is paratanrian’s action is without any hesitation or contemplation. He may not have the ability to execute the job, but he doesn’t care. It is like “March” command in the army!

ONE MINUTE – 10

artha panchagam is YAHOO

artha panchagam is about five doctrines (aka truths, philosophy, interrelationships etc.), which is the key foundational entities in viSiShtAdvaitam. It is an elegant, masterpiece of arrangements in a systematic way.

Since the dawn, both science and philosophy explore the question of the purpose of all living things, where they come from and where are they going eventually. To understand this in a precise form, from the principles underpinned in Sri viShistAdvaitam is where artha panchagam comes into play.

Basically it deals with five things to explain easily

1.Individual soul (jeevAtmA),

2.God (paramAtmA),

3.The ultimate bliss (parama purushArttam, upEyam, sAdhyam, phalan, pEru),

4. Means to achieve that reward (upAyam, sAdhanam, vazhi, Aru), and

5. Hurdles that is preventing so far to attain that reward (virOdhi)

This can be easily remembered through the acronym YAHOO

Y – You, jeevAtmA, the individual soul

A – Access, upAyam, the means or the route

H – Him, the paramAtmA, ultimate God, the super soul

O – Objective, purushArttam, final objective, ultimate bliss

O – Obstacles, thadai, virOdhi, hurdles and stoppers

You Access Him with the Objective without any Obstacles, to put it simply.

Thus artha panchagam is about the nature of the Lord, Soul, Means, Obstacles and Ends. Out of these five, means and ends (upAyam and upEyam) are crucial, and even in those two, Ends is the critical piece, one needs to concentrate on. In mundane life also, aren't we more worried on where are we going?

ONE MINUTE – 11

Who is this person that we call Him as God?

SrIvaishNava philosophy is explained through five primary doctrines (artha pa~ncakam). We named it with a mnemonic YAHOO (You Access Him with the Objective without any Obstacles). In that, the "Him" refers to God. He is unique and superior to everything else in every aspect. He is the super soul.

Now the question is, who this ultimate God (paramAtma tattvam, Esvaran) is, and how is He like? For that we seek help from the authorities (pramANAs) like sruti, smriti, ithihAsa purAna, and agama sAstras. They tell unequivocally that this Lord is Sriman nArAyaNA, .

How do we understand Him? Well that is not an easy task even for seers (rishIs). He is beyond any definition or description; He is beyond any name or nomenclature; He is beyond any cause or class. Even vedAs, the highest authority says, "Yato vAco nivartantE aprApya manasA saha Anandam brahmanO

vidvAn". That is, this Lord can't be recognized through words or thoughts. His innate nature (svarUpA) is full of extreme bliss (Anandam). When the highest authority VedAs itself tried to describe bhagavAn and return utterly defeated by not even try to describe him one billionth of a percent, imagine ordinary poor souls like us trying to understand Him! Don't despair! The same vedA, in another place say," avij~nAnam vijAnatAm vij~nAnam avijAnatAm" If one thinks that he understood bhagavAn, in reality he does not know anything about Him, and vice versa. So, we come to conclusion that what we know and learn from sAstrAs is only a miniscule about bhagavAn.

Let us try to describe an iota of Him through sAstrAs as our AcAryAs have taught us.

1. The final God is only one, without any second. Nothing is equal to or above Him. That is Sriman nArAyaNA. He is real (satyam), full of knowledge (jnAnam), boundless in all aspects (anandam), ultimate bliss (AnAndam), and pure (amalatvam). He is always with the consort of lakshmi and inseparable from Her (SrIapatitavam). These six are called essential and exclusive attributes (svarUpa nirupaka dharma). Just how you can't separate the whiteness from milk, is so you can't separate these attributes from Lord.

2. He has beautiful glittering body which is not tainted and not made of five elements (panca bhUtams).

3. He has an ocean of auspicious qualities (kalyAna gunasAkaran) and void of any negative character.

4. He owns everything, and there is nothing exist that He doesn't own. His ownership can be classified into permanent property (nithya vibhUti) and playful property (leela vibhUti).

veda vyAsA in his brahma sUtrAs describe the God as the one who is the "Cause or reason for the universe" (jagat kAranakan). He is solely responsible for the creation, sustenance and destruction of this universe (srUshti, sthithi and layam of leela vibhUti). Since He is involved with Generation, Operation and Destruction of the universe in that sequence, He is called GOD in short.

ONE MINUTE – 12

Then who am I?

The five primary doctrines (artha pa~ncakam) of SrIvaishNava sampradAyam (philosophy) enlightens us with two types of souls (AtmAs) – Supersoul (paraAtmA) and common soul (jIvAtmA). Various authorities (pramANAs) establish that this supersoul, SrIman nArAyaNA is actually only one soul, without any second. Common souls, on the contrary, are infinite.

To understand the nature of this common soul some of the delusions may have to be cleared. The first illusion is the notion of body and soul is the same (sarIra athma brahmam). In fact, they are far different. Death occurs for body and not for soul. This common soul, just like God, has no birth or death and is eternal. Realizing this, one may be puzzled to arrive at a conclusion that there is something even God can't do. God can't create a new soul nor destroy an existing one. We have studied in Physics, that energy can never be created nor destroyed, but changes from one form to another. Similar to that, here the soul can neither be created nor destroyed but travels from one body to another. At every birth, soul gets into a different body, similar to how we change our clothing. The critical question is how this soul can get into a body which is pure, exclusive, glittering without any disease or deficiencies and stay there forever?

The individual soul has knowledge (j~Anam) same as bhagavAn. Lord has no merits and sins (punya papa karmA) attached and so his knowledge is shiny. But we do have tons of karmA accumulated from millions of births (janmAs) and so we are not that smart now. Once the dirt surrounding our knowledge is removed, that is both merits and sins are nullified, our knowledge will be shiny once again and our soul will be as glorious as the Lord's.

Broadly, these common souls belong to three categories – eternals (nithyAs), liberated (mukthAs) and bounded (baDDhAs). Eternals never associated with birth and death (smasArAm) like ananthA, garuDA, vishveksenA etc. Liberated are the one through some means received the grace of the Lord and ascended to mOksham and baDDhAs are like us still struggling through this samsAram. The knowledge (j~Anam) for eternals is always shiny, for liberated it was once dim and dull like ours and got cleared when climbed to mOksham and for bounded soul like us it is always murky. Similarly the body for eternals and liberated are holy and pristine and for us the bounded souls it is dirty and diseased.

How to bring this perfect knowledge inside us, to come out and shine? How to get the perfect body like eternals? As Lord KrishNA says, that is impossible on this earth, "daivi hy esha guna-mayi mama mAyA duratyayA mAm Eva ye prapatyante mAyAm etAm taranti te". This universe is created by Him and is hard to cross it, without His will. So for us, perfect knowledge (J~Anam) and body (sarIram) is attainable only at mOksham, SrIvaikuntam and not on earth.

ONE MINUTE – 13

What is truth, exactly?

We hear, very often the phrase "nithya karmA" (daily rituals). It's commonly assumed it means sandhyA vandanam, and of course that view is correct. But daily rituals are far more than that. In a broader

sense, daily rituals start from, “satyam vada dharmam chara” – Speak the truth and follow the righteous path. This simple advice coming from taittriya upanishad applies to all human beings, as opposed to sandhya vandanam which is particular only to a hindu, a male and who had his sacred thread (upanyanam). So, nithya karmA for everyone starts from telling the truth.

“Tell the truth,” is an amazing advice that gets everyone excited. Before assuring to abide by that rule, one may wonder what the definition of truth is, after all. In Tamil, tirukkuraL says – vAymai enappaduvatu yAthenin yAthonRum thImai ilAtha solal – Truth means telling something that doesn’t hurt anyone. Manusmiriti says “sathyam brUyAt priyam brUyAt na brUyAt sathyam apriyam”. We have to talk the truth and we have to talk pleasantly. We should not talk truth which is not sweet or we should not talk sweetly of a non-truth. Telling the truth has an advantage that later it is easy to remember what you have told, because there is only one truth.

bhagavAn is amazing. He does miraculous things for the sake of his devotees (bhakthAs). Let us look at a story that happened centuries ago in a divya desam called tirukkaNNapuram. There was a bhattar who takes care of flowers and garlands for the God. He collects them from the garden of the King, who has generously offered everything free for the temple. Unfortunately, the corrupt temple management diverted the flowers and garland to the market to be sold and pocketed the money. Bhattar was powerless and was forced to use old, faded and tainted flowers to God.

One day the King paid a visit to the temple to pay his respects to God. Hearing about the King’s visit, the bhattar hurriedly scavenged all the flowers on the dirty ground and put them on the Lord. When the King stood before the God, he saw a small string of hair hanging on the God. Of course it came from the flowers picked from the ground. But the King was astonished! How the God, who is in the idol form can have hair! He questioned the bhattar, and the bhattar couldn’t reveal the truth and lied. He said, “Yes, this God grows hair”. The King thought that was absurd and got suspicious but decided not to interfere immediately, instead planned on a surprise visit later to figure out what is going on.

The King made a surprise visit, sometime later. Bhattar was startled by King’s surprise entry. He was trembling in fear that the King will find out the plundering that was going on and his lies to cover them up. He was sure that he will be beheaded for his crime. The King came and stood before the main door and the door slowly opened. There, the King saw the idol having locks and locks of hair from His head falling nicely up to His shoulders. The King was completely shocked! More than the King, the bhattar could not believe his eyes! That perumAL is still offering sevA as Souriraja (King of hairs) perumAL at tirukaNNapuram.

On the outset, it looked the bhattar had lied earlier to the King. But bhagavAn didn't consider it as a lie because it was told in an utter distress. To protect the bhattar's words, He changed Himself. That doesn't suggest one can go ahead and lie randomly, but rather emphasizes the context is very crucial. We buy the shoe normally based on our foot size. But if you have unshakeable faith on the Lord, He will change your feet to match the available shoe!

ONE MINUTE – 14

Access, Objective and the Obstacles

The five primary doctrines (artha pa~ncakam) of SrIvaishNava sampradAyam (philosophy) was explained with the acronym YAHOO (You Access Him with the Objective without any Obstacle). You – the individual soul (JivAtmA), and Him - the supersoul (paraAtmA), the two types of souls were explained earlier. The other three components – Access, Objective and the Obstacles are described here briefly.

Objective of any life is to have unending (nithya), boundless (anantha), and supreme happiness (Anandam). The happiness what we encounter and enjoy on the earth (bhu logam) or celestial world (deva logam) or even in Brahma's abode (sathya logam) is, as svAmi desika puts it, "visha madhu," sweet coated poison. The ultimate pristine bliss (paripUrna brahmAnubhavam) can be achieved only in SrIvaikuntam, which is on the other bank of the virajA river (nadhi). That permanent world (nithya vibhUti) doesn't go through creation, sustenance and destruction process (srushti, sthithi and samhAram). To reach there and perform eternal kaimkaryam (service) to Lord Sriman nArAyaNA and to his inseparable consort SrI mahAlkashmi, is the ultimate objective (parama purushArttam) of any soul.

Next question is what is the Access method to reach that place called vaikuntam? Scriptures (sAstrAs) including SrImad bhagavad gItA preached by Lord kRishNA says, karma (rituals and actions), jN~Ana (knowledge), bhakthi (steadfast devotion) and prapatti (total unconditional surrender). Of these, the karma and jn~Ana are transitional step that leads to bhakthi or prapatti. Bhakthi or prapatti is the only true means (upAyam) for the mOskham. Between these two, bhakthi is a long, arduous path that may take millions of births to complete. Because of the greatness of bhakthi route, one is sure that he will reach moksham, but the question is when?

VasishtA, the guru for Lord SrIrAma, great tattva jn~ani, has faced a huge delay in attaining the mOksham, while, kshatra bhandu and vrudhrAsurA, the enemies of bhagavAn, reached mOksham very quickly. So it is hard to gauge how many good deeds (punyAs) one has in his account to achieve the mOksham without any delay, through bhakthi yoga. But prapatti will yield the results whenever one

wants it! Bhagavad rAmAnuja says surrendering to the Lord's feet (saranAgati) is the only surest way to gain His compassion.

The last one in this artha pa~ncakam is Obstacles. One may be curious to understand why he didn't attain the moksham so far and what were the true stoppers? The main obstacle is ignorance (ajn~Anam). In fact the vicious circle is ajn~Anam (ignorance), karmA (action), vAsani (aroma), ruchi (taste), and deha sambhandham (rebirth). The reason one gets trapped into this recursion is from rebelling bhagavAn's commands for several births (janmAs). His orders are vedAs and other dharma sAstrAs. Neglecting and overstepping the sAstrAs results in Lord's wrath (Ajn~Adilanganam) and fall prey to His punishment (bhagavad nigraham) to suffer in the birth/death cycle (samsAram).

Proper understanding the three rahasyAs (secrets) enables an individual soul (jIvAtmA) to seek the clear Access method (upAyam) and helps him to avoid the Obstacles (thadai) and gain the Objective (moksham), swiftly. Thus knowledge of the five doctrines (artha pan~caka jn~Anam) leads one to contemplate on the rahasya trayam.

Ohm namO nArAyaNAya

dvyam is 25 letters and 6 words

SrIman nArAyaNa charanu SaraNam prapattyE

SrImathE nArAyaNAya nama:

charama slokam is 32 letters and 12 words.

sarvadharmAn parityajya mAm Ekam Saranam vraja

aham tva sarvapApEpyO mokshayishyAmi mA sucha:

Though two other charama slokams instructed by SrI varAha perumAn and by Lord Sri rAmA does exist, only KrishNa charama slokam is included in the rahasya trayam, since it is precise, complete and direct.

AcAryAs say that svAmi ALavandAr's stotra ratnA which has 65 verses is the essence of the 65 lettered three rahasyAs. We will continue with details of the three mantrAs, at an entry level, in the subsequent writings.

ONE MINUTE – 15

What is rahasya trayam (three secrets)?

To understand, appreciate and enjoy the Lord Sriman nArAyaNA and His wealth (vibhUti), we need to understand the three secrets (rahasya trayam) as instructed by our teachers (purvAcAryAs). Some brush off these mantrAs aside thinking this is only for old people as a pastime. But be assured, these mantrAs are equally caring to those who are young and have energy and ambitions to go and conquer the entire world.

The three mantrAs are tirumantram (tiruashtAksharam, ettu ezhuttu mantriam), dvayam (sarangati mantra, mantra ratnA), and charma slokA (as instructed by Lord krishNA in bhagavad gitA). All the three mantrAs are exposed by Lord Sriman nArAyaNA. Tirumantram to narA at badrikAsramam, dvayam to SrImahAlakshmi at SrIvaikuntam and charama slokam to arjunA at kurukshektrA. All the three mantrAs are propagagted later successively by our AcAryA lineage (paramparai) in an unbroken chain. Proper understanding of these through the guidance of their own AcAryA will be the lynch pin to understand everything else in srIvaishNava philosophy.

svAmi desikA says “mUnril oru mUnRum mUviraNdum munnAnukm thOnRath tholaiyum thuyar”. That is (mUnril) of the three holy triads, (thOnRa) if one understands the intricacies of, (oru mUnRum) the three worded tirumantram, (mUviraNdum) six worded dvayam and, (munnAnukm) twelve worded charama slokam, (tholaiyum thuyar), he will be out of all sorrows and ensures himself for the liberation from birth/death cycle (smasAram).

svAmi piLLailOkAcAriyAr says “mumukshuvukku aRiya vENdiya rahaSyam mUnRu. The one, who aspires for mokshA, needs to understand the three secrets, very clearly.

tirumantram is 8 letters (aksharAs) and 3 words (padham).

ONE MINUTE – 16

Contemplation of three realities (Tattvat thraya sinthanai)

Knowledge of five primary doctrines (artha pan~cagam) is essential for emancipation (mOksham) from the birth/death cycle (samsAram). Those five entities can be further simplified into an easy concept of three basic realities (tattva threyam). Looking from a different angle, SrI vaiShNava philosophy (siddhAntam) deals with three R-s, namely Reality (tattvam), Route (hitam) and Rewards (puruShArtham). Here, Route is either bhakthi (deep devotion) or prapatti (unconditional total surrender); rewards is attaining mOksham, the ultimate one. Now we deal with the first R – Reality, which is the three realities (tattva treyam).

Tattva threyam has been a prime distinguishing feature of visihtAdvatitam (qualified non-duality), as instructed by our teachers (AcAryAs). Unlike advaitam (non-duality), where there is only one reality and in dvaitam (duality) there is two, in visishtaAdvaitam it is three. It is simply ACE (Achit, Chit and Esvaran), three independent realities.

Achit (non-sentient things) is like wood, sofa, stone, TV etc. which does not have any knowledge (jn~Anam). Chit has knowledge (chaitanyam) and all the jIvAtmAs fall into this category. When we say chetanA it means a jIvAtmA residing inside a body (sarIram). That jIvAtmA can reside in a human body, in an animal, or in a tree etc. Humans, birds, animals, palnt are all chetanAs. Finally, Esvaran is bhagavAn Sriman nArAyaNA.

vedAs mention tattva threyam as bhOkthA, bhOgyam, prEritA – enjoyer, enjoyment object, and controller. Our jIvAtmA is the enjoyer (bhOkthA). Our body (sarIram) and the surrounding world (prapanjam) is the enjoyment object (bhOgyam). bhagavAn is the controller. Western philosophy calls this tattva threyam as God, man and nature.

achetanAs is of three types – prakriti (basic material for the universe), kAlam (time) and, suddha tattvam (transcendental substance). prakriti is primordial matter and suddha sattvam is celestial matter. Thus achetanAs is nothing but time and matter.

chetanAs are three types – baDDHa (bounded), mukthA (liberated) and nithyA (eternals). baDDhAs are earth bound and their body is made out of prakriti. mukthA and nithyA's body is made of sudda tattvam. One easy way to remember three types of chetanAs is – consider the two places, earth (leela vibhUti) and mOksham (nithya vibhUti). Four possibilities of residents can be derived – 1. who stay on earth

(baDDhAs), 2. moved from earth to mOksham (mukthAs), 3. Stay only in mOksham (nithyAs), and 4. moved from mOksham to earth.

The last possibility generally, never happens because, when one goes to mOksham there is no karmA (merits and sins) associated, and so there is no necessity to be born again in earth. vedAs claim, “na cha punarA vartatE na cha punarA vartatE”, one who goes there (mOksham), never returns back. But bhagavAn can send a nithyA or a mukthA to earth for a specific purpose, like He commanded anantha (Adi seshan) to be born as bhagavad rAmAnujA.

Lord is a chetanA also, but of the highest caliber. He is the supreme, master, not subservient to anyone, and the final authority that can never be changed. Even in mOksham, muktAs and nithyAs may have the glory of that place, but will never acquire the powers of the Lord. Metaphorically, it is like you are allowed to stay and enjoy the white house, but can never declare a war!

We, chetanAs are not God (paramAtmA) and will never become one, even in mOksham! In fact prakriti, jivAtmA, and paramAtmA are three independent realities. When vedAs claim that there is only one brahmam (final God) exists, it means there is only one bhagavAn. But He exists with His inseparable parts of chetanA and achetanAs together. That is visishtAdvaitam, qualified non-dualism.

ONE MINUTE – 17

the good, the bad and the ugly

Three types of chetanAs (sentient things) exist. They are Good, {was} bad, and the ugly – nithyAs (eternals), mukthAs (emancipated), and baDDhAs (bounded). nithyAs are ever clean of karmAs. muktAs were once dirty in samsAram and then were cleaned up. baDDhAs still dirty and muddle through samsAram. All of them, no doubt are slaves (seshan) to the God (bhagavAn) endlessly. BhagavAn is the only master (seshi) ever, and that truth holds good even in mOksham.

SrI vishNu sahsranAmam says – “avikArAya sudDhAya nityAya paramAtmanE”. avikAra means no change. It refers to chetanAs whose AtmA is constant and distinguishes from ever changing achetanAs. suddhAya means mukthAS, were once unclean and purified later. nityAya are eternally clean. paramAtmA is Lord SrIman nArAyaNA, who is the supreme and master to all the chetanAs.

bhagavd rAmAnujA says in gadyam, “svAdhina trivida chetanAchetana svrUpa stithi pravritti”. The innate nature, continued existence and activity (svarUpa, sthithi and pravritti) of the three types of chetanAs (baDDhAs, muktAS and nityAs) and three types of achetanAs (prakriti, kAlam and suddha tattvam) are all under the will (sankalpam) of the Lord.

svarUpa means the essential nature of the object; it is the attribute(s) that uniquely identify an object. For jIvAtmA, the attributes are BASKET (Bliss, Atomicity, Servitude, Knowledge, Eternal Taintless) (Anandam, aNuthvam, seshatvam, jn~Anam, nithyam and amalam). stithi means continued existence of the object and pravritti means activity.

Let us look at the svarUpa, stithi, pravritti for the three types of the chetanAs.

For baDDhAs (bounded)

1. svarUpA - reduced knowledge state due to karmA. Though the jIvAtmA by itself is very luminous, the endless accumulation of sins blocks its luster. Its Bliss, Knowledge and taintlessness are all dull and dimmed.

2. stithi - their continued lives across multiple births, till they reach mOksham.

3. pravritti - Anywhere from brahmA to lowest level grass, because of their avidyA (ignorance) they do actions and go through the consequences (phalan). Depending upon their account ledger (karmA) they take different bodies and their knowledge (jn~Anam) level expands and shrinks accordingly. The AtmA inside which holds the body is finally responsible for all the actions and continues births endlessly.

For muktAs (emancipated)

1. svarUpa – muktAs are baDDha jIvAs only till they complete the means(upAyam) to reach mOksham. All the obstacles are removed and their true nature comes out (svarUpa AvirbAham) when they reach mOksham.

2. Stithi – Since they moved from baDDhA jIvan to mukthi, there is a beginning point for them from the prakriti aspect. But when they reach mOksham there is no end for the enjoyment and there is no difference among muktAs or nityAs. Since kAlam (time) has no power in mOksham (time stands still), there is no senior or junior in mOkshm due to their arrival date.

3. Pravritti – This muktA, just like nityA performs all kind of service (kaimkaryams) to the bhagavAn and pIrAtti (lakshmi) and pleases THEM.

For nithyAs (eternals)

1. svarUpa – is always bright, without any beginning (anAdhi) and without any end (anantham). No obstacles ever faced.

2. Stithi – Since all nityAs perform kaimkaryam to bhagavAn and lakshmI, there is no difference in stithi from one to other. It is without any beginning and without any end

3. Pravritti – Anyone can perform any kaimkryam they wish. There is no greed, jealousy or rivalry. Though annatha, garua, vishvaksenA perform specific kind of service and there is no iota of difference in happiness (Anandam) amongst the jIvans in mOksham.

The three types of chetanAs BEE (Bounded, Emancipated and Eternals), circling the bhagavAn like a bee ringing around the nectar.

ONE MINUTE – 18

hmm! You mean I have two intelligence (jn~Anam)?

"bhOktA bhOgyam prEithAnjca matvA sarvam prOktam trividham brhamamEtatat," says svEtAsvara upanishad. Here bhOktA (enjoyer) is jIvAtmA (individual soul), bhOgyam (enjoyment object) is achEtanAs (non-sentients) and prEritA (controller) is bhagavAn (god) and that is what is called tattva trayam three realities). For example, if you get prasAda viniyogam (free food distribution) at the temple, you are the bhOktha, prasadam is the bhOgyam and the distributor is the prEritA.

Among this, chEtanAs are three types - BEE (bounded, emancipated and eternal) baDDhA, muktA, nithyAs. Esvaran is only one and He is para tattvam (final God). The common quality among all chEtanAs including Esvaran is their AtmA

1. to possess svarUpa jn~Anam (consciousness) and

2. Is svayam prakAsam - appearing by itself (luminous by itself) [thAnAgavE thOnRukai]. You don't need any external help like eye, ears etc. for AtmA to show its existence.

Not only this this svarUpa jn~Anam is luminous by itself (svayam prakAsam), it is luminous to itself (prathyakthvam). It is appearing to itself as "I", all the time. This property appearing to inward to itself [thanakku thOnRukai] is called prathyakthvam; that is the benefit of this luminosity is enjoyed by itself.

For every chEtanA including baDDhAs, this svarUpa jn~Anam is present eternally and is constant without any expansion or shrinkage.

jn~Anam and pratyakthvam being common to both chEtanA and esvaran, makes them equal. But the kind of jn~Anam possessed is what makes the God, the master and we, the chEtanAs are slaves. That knowledge inside all chEtnAs, is so intricate and inseparably entangled with it, keeps reminding "you are a servant to the Lord." That is what commonly our scripts say that "your svarUpam itself is sehsatvam (servitude) and paratantriyam (not independent).

AthmA is called dharmI (substance) and its qualities, character are called dharmam (attributes or modes). svarUpa jn~Anam is dharmI jn~Anam (substantive consciousness). But for chEtanAs and Esvaran, yet another type of knowledge is associated, called dharma bhUta jn~Anam (attributive knowledge). This is different from the svarUpa jn~Anam mentioned above. This dharma bhUta jn~Anam is self-luminous and dos not need any external knowledge to show it. But it is not luminous to itself. It is luminous only to the AtmA which possess it and it helps the AtmA to perceive other objects.

chEtanAs possess this dharma bhUta jn~Anam at various levels depending upon their karma (merits and sins) and their present body (sarIram). Since mutkAs, nityAs and Esvaran have no karmA, their dharma bhUta jn~Anam is perfectly transparent and limitless. But for baDDhAs it is limited by their karmAs.

Since this dharma bhUta jn~Anam is always associated with chEtanA as an attribute and doesn't exist alone, there is no need to classify it separately as achEtana tattvam (like prakriti, kAlam and sudda tattvam). For example, if patience is a quality, it can't exist alone. You have to say Rama is patient and krishNA is impatient etc. and exists as an attribute only.

The common characteristics (sAmyam) between Athma svarUpa jn~Anam (dharmI jn~nam) and dharma bhuta jn~Anam is both being knowledgeable and svayam prakAsam (being luminous by themselves). The difference (vaishamyam) between them is, that dharma bhuta jn~Anam alone reveals objects other than itself (vishayaitvA) and svarUpa jn~nam alone is prathyakthvam (showing to itself).

ONE MINUTE – 19

Time and two types of matter

The three non-sentients (achEtanAs)

In SrIviashNavam, achEtanAs (non-sentient) are classified under time and matter. The matter is from which everything is created including AkAsa (space), vAyu (air) etc. That matter is broken into earthly matter (for the lack of a better word) and celestial matter. Both of them are different. The two types of matter and kAlam (time) put together are the three achEtanA (non-sentient) tattvams categorized.

prakriti (prime matter for the universe), kAlam and sudda tattvam (matter for celestial world) are the achEtanAs. They have no jn~Anam (knowledge or consciousness). They are perceived and used only by others and not by themselves. For example, table is an achEtnA. It has no knowledge, it does not know it is a table, and it is of no use to itself. Only chEtanAs perceive it as a table and use it. These qualifications apply to dharma bhuta jn~Anam also. But dharma bhUta jn~Anam is an attribute of the AthmA only and so it is not classified as a separate achEtana tattvam. Essentially, only three achEtana tattvams is the minimal set.

trigunAs (three characters) are mentioned in many places. They are sattva (love, compassion, holy, pure, serene, truth and harmony), rAjasa (greed, lust, impatience, extravaganza, pride, and loud mouth), thAmasa (confusion, dull, sleepy, inertia, darkness, obsession, deceit, vengence and treachery) gunAs. Prakriti is dharmI (matter) and these trigunAs are the dharmam (features). Everything under prakriti is made up of these three gunAs and that is why it is commonly referred as tirguna prakriti. These trigunAs exist in prakriti at varying levels depending upon location and time. When the three gunAs are present at equal proportion, then it is called praLayam (deluge).

Sudda tattvam, on the contrary, as the name indicates is composed of sattva gunA only, and is completely void of the other two. It is three fourth in size (tripAth vibhuthi), and prakriti is one fourth of the total. What we see in this universe is prakriti and what is on the side of the great virajA nadhi (river) is mOksham which is made up of sudda tattvam.

Everything in mOksham like the street, mamdapam, pillars, tirumEni (body) of nityAs (eternals), etc. is made up of sudda tattvam only. They are all nithyam (permanent), though some temporary sudda tattvams can exist and disappear too. vedAs say that if a muktA wants to see his parents it can happen so in mOksham. When it does so, their body etc. is all temporary sudda tattvam. Everything there pleases the bhagavAn and happens under His sankalpam (will). The avatAra tirumEni of bhagavan, like the body of Lord rAmA and krishNA, and the divya magaLa vigraham (idol forms) in the temples are also of sudda tattvam. While both prakriti and kAlam is classified as jadam (not luminous by themselves), according pAnca rAtra sAstram, sudda tattvam is ajadam (luminous by itself).

kAlam is a special kind of achEtnA, in that it is pervasive; it is spread everywhere (vibhu). Remember prakriti and sudda tattvams have restricted locations. For kAlam, there is no Adhi (beginning) and it is ever present. There is no measure to measure kAlam. Its divisions like minute, hour, day, week, month, etc. are useful for srushtI (creation). Though kAlam is present in mOksham it has no power and exists under the supremacy of the Lord. “Time stands still” makes sense there.

ONE MINUTE – 20

Cosmic creation and the twenty six alphabets

Prakriti (primitive matter), being the basic ingredient of the universe, is very fascinating to us among the three achEtana tattvams (non-sentient entities). It is always associated with its attributes called trigunAs (three characters).

During the srusthi (creation) and sthithi (sustenance) period of the universe, when these trigunAs exist in uneven in proportion among themselves, prakriti evolves itself into different forms and names (nAma, rUpam); it is like a raw material that is processed in a factory. At any, the time raw material and its intermediate products are present at various quantities. Thus prakriti (aka avyakthA (undifferentiated), pradhAnam (primary), mUla prakriti (primordial matter), tirgunA (triple quality)) manifests itself into 23 other tattvams.

During praLayam (deluge or cosmic sleep), the three gunAs (sattva, raAsa and thAmasa) attain an equilibrium, all the intermediate products are unwound, and only prakriti remains at the end. Universe is created from prakriti on expansion process and then winds back to prakriti at deluge. Modern astronomy also supports this theory by claiming that our universe will eventually be shrunk to a size, nothing more than a dot! Remember, whatever that exists in universe is present already in prakriti inherently.

The 24 physical entities which start from prakriti that undergo transformation are given below.

• 1st prakriti

• 2nd mahat (universal mind or supreme universal intelligence and stores blue prints of all manifestations),

• 3rd ahamkAram (egoism; the “I-ness”, feeling of the self)

• 4-8 are jn~AnEndiryAs (knowledge senses) (eye, nose, tongue, skin, ear) {These are like entry doors or senses of internal cognition or perception -- seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, hearing}

• 9-13 are karmEndriyAs (motor senses) [vAk (mouth), pANi (arms), pAdhA (foot), pAyu (excretive organ), upastA (procreative organ)]. {These are like exit doors or physical external expressions – speaking, grasping, moving, eliminating and reproducing}

• 14-18 are panca tanmAtrAs (five subtle elements of sense quality) [sabdham, sparsam, rUpam, rasam and gadham (sound, touch, form, taste, smell)]

• 19-23 are panca mahA bhUtAs (five gross elements) [prthivi, appu, thEjas, vAyu, AkAsA (earth, water, fire, air, ether)]

• 24 is manas (individual mind)

The above are 24 tattvams belonging to achEtnA group; in some places it is defined more or less than this 24 set. But this is the minimal set our AcAryAs are preaching. For example one can include ice, or snow to be another tattvam. But that is unnecessary, when it can easily be derived from water. Each of the above 24 tattvAs and the deities reigning over (abhimAni devathA) them needs to be clearly understood for proper meditation.

Adding chEtanA as the 25th and Esvaran as the 26th tattvam to the above, completes the 26 alpahabets of SrIvaishNvam. SvAmi desikA has a wonderful Tamil pAsuram (verse), glorifying the 24 tattvAs plus the JIvAtmA as ornaments and weapons adorning Lord SrIman nArAyaNA's tirumEni (body).

ONE MINUTE – 21

Why I am not God!

bhagavAn has some exclusive qualities that I, for that matter you and none of us don't have. We will try to understand them at three levels.

First Level - The root word "bhagam" in bhagavAn implies six qualities – jn~Ana, bhala, aishwarya, vIrya, sakthi, and thEjas (knowledge, strength, lordship, valor, energy and glory). They are somewhat common qualities. MuktAs (those who reach mOksham), nityAs (those who has been there forever), is also being conferred with the same jn~Anam, Anandam, tejas. In fact if the Lord steps down from his throne, it is hard to identify who is bhagavAn and who is nithyA or muktA, since they all look-alike.

Second level – classified under svrUpa nirUpaka dharmam (exclusive qualities that uniquely identifies God): sathyam, jn~Anam, anandam, Anandam, amalatvam, and sriyapatithvam (Truth, knowledge, limitlessness, ultimate bliss, flawlessness, and consort of SrI). What is said in the earlier level applies here too. There are some overlaps between Lord and the other chetanAs in some of these qualities.

Third and critical level: srushti, sthithi, samhAram, anupravesam, moksha pradAnam, and sriyapativam (Creation, sustenance, dissolution, insertion of an atmA inside a body, awarding mOksham and consort of SrI). These six are highest and most distinguishing qualities. bhagavAn never shares any of this with anyone including mukthAs (liberated) or nithyAs (eternals). Even in paramapadam, Lord is different from others by these six.

Think Lord's moksham is like a white house. He is the president. NityAs and muktAs are kids. They all sit and share the same food on the dining table and enjoy. But the kids never go out and earn money and bring food. That is the job of the father. It is like staying in the white house and have the glory, but no one other than Him never ever will be the president. jagat kAraNam (creation, sustenance and dissolution) are bhagavAn's exclusive job. Similarly anu pravesam is also bhagavAn's job. That is to insert inside a body, an atmA and Him and stay inside. mOksha pradAnam is also exclusive right for Him. Just because we are muktAs and once we go to mOksham, we can't call all our friends and offer them free entry. Finally He is the only Sriyapati. That is SrI mahA Lakshmi is only for Him.

These six distinguishing characters confirm that there is no aikyam (unity) between Esvaran and chetanAs; but there are some sAmyam (equality) in some areas like Anandam, jn~Anam etc. We are different from BhagavAn for sure, yet we are inseparable part of Him. ANDAL in her tiruppAvai showed all the essence of vedAnta with one word "uravu" (relation).

To put it in an easy formula, consider only one aspect. BhagavAn is vibhu (present everywhere and controls everything) and we are all aNu (atomic) and restricted by time, space and state. Even if we could achieve some sort of partial vibhutvam, it is only because Lord has granted it and is not natural (svAbhAvikA) to us.

ONE MINUTE – 22

Where would I see the God?

bhagavAn (Lord) is present everywhere and in everything according our sanAtana dharmA (vedic culture). Rishis (seers) can indulge in deep meditation (tapas), visualize in their heart (dhyAnA) and enjoy

the Lord internally (sAkshAtkAram). Unfortunately, most of the poor souls like us are neither that lucky nor self-controlled to get accomplish that status. To comprehend Him, at least think of Him and feel happy and gratified to perform any kind of service (kaimkaryam), we desperately require some tangible forms.

Our AcAryAs (gurus) classified five forms of the Lord easy for us to understand and pray to Him – param, vyuham, vibhavam, hArtham or antharyAmi and archai (transcendent, emanation, incarnation, indwelling and iconic).

Param (supreme) is where Lord Sriman nArAyaNA in SrIvaikuntam along with His consorts SrIdevi, bhUdevi, neelA devi and nityas (eternals) like ananta (inseparable serpent bed), garudA (divine vehicle), vishvaksenar (chief of staff) and muktAs (liberated souls). “pAttu kEtkumidam paramapadam”; SrIvaikuntam is the place where music is being heard. It is a real place on the other side of virajA river, where only satvAgunA (noble characters) is present, karma is absent, and time has no power. No creation, sustenance or dissolution happens there and so it is called nithya vibhuti (permanent world). No need for vedAs because everyone’s knowledge is perfect. No one is thirsty, hungry, being sad, jealous, get old, die or have any limitations. Everything and everyone is pristine and happy in performing eternal kaimkaryam to the Lord. It is the ultimate objective, liberation from birth/death cycle (mOksham), every soul can aspire for.

Parama padam (supreme place) is a one way street and not everyone is that lucky to reach there, including brahma, sivA, other devAs and common humans like us. devAs, though higher than us in power, but constantly quarrel among themselves and need Lord to arbitrate their family feud. So, the Lord descends and lay down on the kshIrabdi, tiruppArkadal (milky ocean) in his yoga nitrA (cosmic sleep). “kUppidu kEtkumidam pArkadal” It is place for Lord to hear complaints. If SrIvaikuntam is Lord’s bedroom, milky ocean is His family room. tiruppArkadal is below virajA river and it is in the extreme part of leela vibhuti (playful world).

para vAsudevan descends down as vyuha vAsudevan. Vyuham means division or manifestation. vyuha vAsudevan splits Himself into sankarshanA, pradyumnA and aniruddhA. Besides these four emanations forms, there are twelve sub emanation forms like KEsvA, nArAyaNa, mAdhavA etc. also exist. All the forms have all noble qualities all the time. But for meditation purposes, each form is highlighted with certain special character, for example energy and splendor is attributed to aniruddhA. From aniruddhA in milky ocean, the Lord takes different incarnations (vibhavAvatArams) and descends even further down to earth.

ONE MINUTE – 23

Where would I see the God on earth?

param (supreme) and vyuham (emanations), first two types of forms of bhagavAn described earlier are far away and inconceivable for the ordinary souls on the earth. Lord, with His unlimited compassion, makes Himself lower and comes down to the earth.

The glorious births or incarnations of the Lord are called vibhavAvatArams. vibhava means evolution or greatness. avatAram means descending down. upanishad states “ajAyamAnO bahutA vijAyatE”, the one who has no birth is born many times. svAmi desika asserts the purposes of His births by saying “piRavAmai tantida thanE piRakkum perumaigaLum”; Lord’s several births are to end our births. The vital motive for his avatArams is to liberate us and grant our salvation.

Lord’s countless avatArams are hard to realize or recognize them. They can be classified as direct (sAkshAth) and entry (AvEsa). The entry incarnation is broken into innate nature (svarUpa AvEsam) and energy nature (sakthi AvEsam). Let us make it simple by showing examples – Lord poured energy on arjunA, VyAsA and showed His presence (sakthi AvEsa avatAram). On parsurAmA and balarAmA, Lord in His full form (rUpam) entered into their body (svarUpa AvEsa avatAram). rAmA and krishNa are examples of direct incarnations (sAkshAth avatArams).

Ten avatArams (dasAvatAram) of the Lord is spoken of greatly in the scriptures. They are matsya (fish), kUrma (tortoise), varAha (wild boar), nArasimha (half lion-half man), vAmana (dwarf), parsurAma (rAmA with axe), SrI rAma, balarAma (strong rAmA), SrI Krishna and kalki (apoclyptic, destroyer of foulness). First four had happened in satya yuga (first in a set of four yugAs); next three in tretA yuga; following two in dvApara yuga; and last one in kali yugA, yet to happen. One can easily notice the evolution sequence in this list.

More than thirty avatArams have been revealed in pAncarAtra samhitA, Srimad bhAgavtam, and by SvAmi desika. Other popular avatArams besides the famed ten are -- hayagrIvA (horse-necked man), nara nArAyaNA (teacher and disciple), danvantri (divine doctor), dattatreya (magician), mOhini (memsmerizing dame), hamsA (swan), gajendra varada (elephant rescuer), kapilA (sAnkhya yoga philosopher), nAradA (divine singer), pritu (earth’s first ruler), rishaba (the righteous king), veda vyAsa (organizer of vedAs), yaJna (ritual sacrifice), buddhA, and the list goes on.

You can visualize a metaphor - SrIvaikuntam is the bedroom, where Lord is enjoying; tiruppArkadal is the family room where He mediates the quarrels among the family members; bhUlokam is the street where perumAL getting out of the house and casually acquainting with the neighbors. Well, to meet the bhagavAn in the street (vibhavAvataram) one has to be in the place and at the same time. Most of us are not that lucky to see with our own eyes and enjoy bhagavAn's vibhavAvatarams. We can only hear bhagavAn's leelA and immerse ourselves in the ecstatic mood.

ONE MINUTE – 24

Where would I see the God, inside me?

Lord viShNu's incarnations (avatArams) are limited to certain times and places only. Only those who were at that time and place can be benefited. Even svAmi nammAzhvAr, who was born a few days after Lord KrishNa went away from this earth, regretted that he couldn't see Him. Poor souls like us need invariably an even more readily accessible form of the Lord than avatArams to cherish and worship.

That brings us to the fourth form of the Lord called immanent (antaryami), divine presence of the bhagavAn within all living things. We have a body (sarIraram) outside and a soul (jIvAtmA) inside. But hardly, we realize that bhagavAn (paramAtmA) is also residing in our body adjacent to our soul. Upanishad compares the individual soul (jIvAtmA) and Supersoul (paramAtmA) as two friendly birds sitting on the same tree. The jIvAtmA eat the fruit and suffers; the paramAtmA is watching but doesn't eat, never suffers. The lord is in a subtle form (sUkshma rUpA) inside us. Lord KrishNA says in bhagavad gItA, "Isvara: sarvabhutAnAm hruthESa arjuna tishtati" lord is sitting inside every creature's heart.

This antaryAmi rUpam of bhagavAn even though closest to us, is hard to meditate upon. Rishis and yOgis can do meditation (dhyAnam) of the holy form (divya mangaLa vigraham) of the Lord and perform bhakthi yOgA. sAtvata samhidai says "ashtAnga yOga siddhAnAm hruthyAga nirathAtmanAm"; yOgis through ashtAnga yOga (eight component meditation)meditate on the Lord inside their heart. So this form is also impractical for common people.

Common analogy that our AcAryAs make here – For a man who is thirsty, clouds (parama padham) which are a form of water is of no use; ocean (tiruppArkadal) which is salty is of no use; rivers which are flooded (vibhavam) are useful only if he is nearby at that time; subsoil water, the one below the ground level under his feet (antaryAmi) is no use because it is hard to dig up; finally if he approaches any of the ponds and lakes (archA) which are the deposits of rain and river, that is the one sure would help him to quench his thirst.

In our metaphor, SrIvaikuntam is Lord's bedroom, tiruppArkadal is the family room, vibhavAvatArams on earth is taking a stroll in the street. So it is hard to go to Lord's house or meet Him in the street. What

else can we do? He has given us a cell phone; the cell phone is always with us, that is our mind, organs (indriyams) and soul (AtmA). Somewhere buried in there also is His number (antaryAmi). We, except for a few don't know how to call Him, and He rarely calls us. But we use the cell phone given by Him and make calls for all other purposes, very conveniently. Likewise we use all our senses (indriyams) given by Him in areas other than reaching the bhagavAn.

Final form archai is like skype on your computer. You can see any number of perumALs, any time when you tune into that channel. You can see and hear. But you need to go near a desktop (any temple) or carry a laptop (sALagrAmam and vigraha moorthy) with you. We will see the details of archAvatArams next.

ONE MINUTE – 25

Where would I see the God, around me?

The final form of Lord Sriman nArAyaNA is archai. It is the iconic form or image manifestation. Para (supreme), vyUha (emanations), vibhava (descendent), and antaryAmi (immanent) forms can be perceived and meditated upon by rishis and yOgis; but not so easily by common people. On the other hand, the archA moorthy is the epitome of easy accessibility (saulabhyam). In this, a devotee (bhakthA) can see, even touch and enjoy bhagavAn, at any time.

In the archai, Lord manifests Himself into whatever the form, the devotee desires to - vigrahams, sAlagrAmams, paintings, photographs etc. poigaiAzhvAr explicitly declares "tamar ugandhu evvuruvam avvuruvam thane," whichever the form a bhaktha desires to see the Lord, bhagavAn yields and gets intothat form.

Common archa mUrthys are at the temples. The 108 divya desams, euologized by AzhvArs have been the prime kshetrams (divine places) revered for thousands of years. archa mUrthys can be classified on the basis of how they came to existence. Svayam vaktha kshetram (self-manifested temple) is where the Lord reveals Himself in a form that already exists. It is not created or carved by any human hands. Eight of these are recognized - Srirangam, tiruvEngadam, vAnamAmalai (totAdri), SrImushNam, badarikAsramam, pushkaram, naimisAranyam and sAligrAmam; some add kAnchipuram and tirunArayanapuram into this list; daIvEkam is where the idols are installed by devAs (celestials) – tiruvinnagar (oppiliappan kovil), tiruvallikeni, gurvAyur; and mAnusham is where Lord is installed by ordinary humans according to agama sAstrAs – puRi jagannath and many of the current temples.

sAunaka muni says archa incarnation also confers mOksham; "by making a pleasing image of the Lord in gold, silver or any metal and pray onto it, will eliminate the sins and sanctions mOksham." But vigraha ArAdhanA (worship of metallic idols of certain size) need pratishtai (establishment, accession) and strict rituals to abide by. So Lord makes Himself even further lower to be available as sAlagrAmam (sacred stone). These millions of years old fossil stones are picked from the banks of Gandaki river in Nepal.

In both the cases of vigraham and sAlagramam, the bhakthA pours his affection and treat them as a child. He gives shower, dresses up, applies perfume, decorates with flowers and jewelry, offers prepared food and fruits and puts them to sleep. The Lord enjoys all the meticulous caretaking of the devotee and gladly accepts them as if he has done everything to His param state in srIvaikuntam. archai is an easily accessible form, which is a replica of the Lord who is transcendent and immanent beyond imagination.

All the five forms – param, vyuham , vibhavam, antharyAmi and archai – are pure and real. They are made of suddasatvam (only pure qualities) and it is the Lord's will that yields into these forms. Lord descends down to earth with all the qualities intact to protect the innocent and reinstate the justice. Lord krishNA says, thus if whoever understands this avatAra rahasyam (the secret of Lord's forms) will attain mOksham. By realizing Lord's infinite sacred qualities (tirukkalyAna guNangaL), when one performs prapatti (unconditional total surrender) as the only plausible means to achieve the ultimate bliss (parama purushArttam), he will definitely get supreme confidence (mahAvisvAsam).

ONE MINUTE – 26

Where the buck stops?

The tattva threyam (three realities) in the visishtAdvatitam is ACE (achit, chit, Esvaran) non-sentient, sentient, and super soul. It clearly states that all the three are distinct, but inseparable. For any chit, the ultimate bliss (parama purushArttam) is to attain mOksham and the only plausible means (upAyam) is prapatti (total unconditional surrender). Now, the question is to whom we have to surrender. Obviously to the one who has the authority to sanction mOksham; that too unlimited authority. That authority has to be so high, that the conferred mOksham can never be vetoed by anyone, anytime.

If one has a problem with the heart, he needs to see a cardiologist for cure and not to an astronaut or a sewage worker? Astronaut and sewage worker may be good in their profession, but they can't cure the heart problem. So it is critical to identify and understand who the supreme god (paradevAta) that can grant the salvation. Otherwise we will be wasting our time wandering behind demi gods through dead ends. pramANams (authoritative texts) say conclusively that Lord SrIman nArAyaNA is the only one who can grant mOksham and when He does so, no one can restrict or revoke it.

Different philosophies exit – unity in atmA, unity in devAs, trimurthys (brahma, vishNu and SivA) are the same, and there is someone beyond these three -- are all absurd talk, because they don't conform to sAstrAs. We rely only on pramANam and not on someone's argumentative (tharkam) ability. pramANams say unequivocally, that Lord SRIman nArAyaNA Is the final god; supreme deity (paradevatA).

If you are in a jail cell, begging to your cell mate to release you from the prison is laughable. He is in the same boat as you are. You need to plead with the one who threw you up in the jail, in the first place. To get out the jail called SamsAram (birth/death cycle), you need to plead with someone outside of prakriti (primordial matter) to help you. devAs, sivA and brahma are like your cell mates. Their power in terms of

awarding mOksham to you is absolute zero. They are jIvAtmAs just like you and me and go through the same karmA. Because their merits (punyAs) are higher they enjoy that, for a while. No doubt they have power and are higher than us. We respect them but we have nothing to gain from them, when our aspirations are for ultimate bliss. They can be instrumental in providing knowledge (jN~Anam) towards our goal. That is like postman delivering the mail. Postman's job is to deliver the mail to the right owner and he has no ownership on the mail that has been trusted.

Lord SrIman nArAyaNA is the cause for everything. He is the final boss and everyone including brahma and sivA and indrA take orders and obey them. All creations are Lord's body and He is the supersoul. brahma, rudrA are all His body and so are you and I. sruti, smrithi, ithihAsa, purANAs and AgamAs claim that Lord SrIman nArAyaNA is the only one who is the supreme deity and there is no one equal or superior to Him. So the buck stops there.

ONE MINUTE – 27

Lord for all, and all for the Lord

Unambiguous understanding of the truth is very crucial to achieve the goal in a timely manner. Otherwise time and life will be wasted in exploring paths which are dead ends. Let us compare Lord SrIman nArAyaNA and others (brhmA, sivA, indrA and all other devAs) as validated by pramANams (sruti, smrithi, itihAsam, purAnAs, Agama sAstrAs); not a complete list, though.

1. emperumAn: the only real supreme deity (pAramArtika paradEvatA) without any second (ekam Eva advitiyam) and He is the only one who has the exclusive authority to grant mOksham, the ultimate bliss.

Others: Not a supreme deity; go through karmic cycle; can't offer mOksham.

2. emperumAn: paramAtmA, inside everything; no karma attached.

Others: jIvAtmA and rewarded based on merits and sins (punya, pApams)

3. emperumAn: Cause (kAraNa vastu) for everything. He is singularly material, efficient and supplementary (upAdAna, nimitta, sahakAri) casue

Others: Created products (kAriya vastu) just like you and me.

4. emperumAn: the supersoul (paramAtmA) and sarIri

Others: everything else is His sarIram (i.e. supported, controlled and owned by Him)

"ka iti brahmanO nAma EsOham sarava dEhinAm

avAm tavAngE sambhUtau tasmAt kEsava nAmavAn"

says SivA. brahmA and myself are created from your body (tirumEni) and that is why you are called kEsavA.

Some pray to other devatAs without realizing that those demi-gods are part of emperumAn's body. This is like putting a nice tie on a shirt and getting so excited thinking the tie belongs to the shirt; actually both the shirt and the tie belongs to the wearer.

5. emperumAn: Giver of all the rewards

Others: Receivers from emperumAn. Their positions are attained as a result of intense prayers towards Lord Sriman nARayaNA.

mahAbhAratA says "yugakOti sahasrAni vishNum Aradya padmabhU:" that brahma received that position by doing penance towards Lord Sriman nArAyaNA for thousand koti (10 billion) yugAs. If any jivAtmA accumulate enough punyAs, he can become a brahmA too. The post is a revolving door.

6. emperumAn: Boundless and doesn't have to answer anyone

Others: All are bounded by emperumAn's mAyA (prakriti - primordial matter) with trigunAs (three basic characters). Their knowledge (jn~Anam) level expands and shrinks.

7. emperumAn: sarva~jan (knower of everything)

Others: Their knowledge level is bestowed by Lord SrIman nArAyaNA based on their karmA.

8. emperumAn: identified by sathyam, jn~Anam, anadam, Anandam, amalatvam and Sriyapathivam. Full of auspicious qualities and void of inauspicious qualities.

Others: Neither auspicious nor easily accessible (non subhAsrayam)

9. emperumAn: He is the final and the buck stops here.

Others: They all depend upon Lord SrIman nArAyaNA. Anything they can offer is actually received from SrIman nArAyaNA first. They are like a middle-man and not the source.

10. emperumAn: mAster (SeShi). Acceptor of all the services (kaimkaryam)

Others: Servants (seshan) of emperumAn. SivA stated this very clearly in the mantrarAjapada stotram.

11. emperumAn: Unique, there is no one equal or greater than Him as validated by sruti, smruti, pUraNa, ithhAsa, Agama sAstrAs and by AzhvAr's divya prabhadham.

Others: One among the many. All are below emperumAn

12. EmperumAn: Bestower of everything including mOksham (supermarket)

Others: Awards petty things, that to under the power granted by emperumAn

If you aspire for mOksham, you need to surrender to SrIman nArAyaNA only. What He blesses is bundled rewards, for here and there. If the Lord can grant such a gigantic reward like mOksham, is He not capable or willing to fulfill our petty mundane requests without asking? You don't need to ask for 65 billion dollars and 24 cents. If you are going to get 65 billion, forget about the 24 cents.

ONE MINUTE – 28

Don't settle for anything less than the Lord's best

The 3Rs in visisthAdvaitam is Reality, Route and Rewards (tattva, hitha, purushArttam). Reality is where you are, Rewards is where you want to go, and Route is the path that takes you there. Reality itself consists of three distinct entities (tattva threyam); ACE - achit, chit and Esvaran (non-sentient, sentient and the super soul).

Briefly, the qualities of chit (individual soul) is atomic, knowledgeable, subservient to the Esvaran, eternal, have no limbs and can't be shrunk, expanded, wet, dry etc. and gets into different bodies (sarIram) based on karma; the qualities of Esvaran is that He is only one, Lord SrIman nArAyaNA and is superior to everything else (paramAtmA) and He supports controls and owns everything in the universe; Achit has no sense and is exists mainly for others to enjoy.

Lord gives jivAmA (individual soul) a body so that he can perform good deeds (punyAs) and climb up to mOksham. Unfortunately most are attracted to cheap and crappy delights (alpa, asthira phalan); in reality, those are sweet coated poison (visha madhu). They tempt him to do more sins and the process continues. Because of the countless accumulated sins, he continues to dwell in in the birth/death cycle (samsAram).

By the grace of AcAryAs one gets the distinctive knowledge (j~NAnam) about the unending distress in this world and how he is qualified to get unending happiness. He recognizes body and soul are different and his soul is not independent but subservient to the Lord. He knows that after death he gets into another body may be a fly or brahma and that cycle goes on. He learns the ultimate objective is to serve (kaimkaryam) the Lord eternally in SrIvaikuntam, which is of no comparison to all cheap pleasures in this universe, including the position of brahmA. That discriminative knowledge between permanent and pass by (nitya anitya vasthu vivEkam) pleasures is the first step towards breaking the recursive loop of samsarA and achieving the redemption.

The knowledge helps him to give up his ego (I, me and mine). He understands how low, desperate, incompetent he is. He feels remorse (nirvEdam) that he has wasted all his life, in fact several lives in the past. He develops a dispassion (Virakthi) on cheap pleasures and abstains from them. Learning about tattva threyam and Lord's commandments (Aj~NA kaimkaryam), he now is scared (bhEdhi) about any transgression of sAstrAs, knowingly or unknowingly. He wants to please the Lord and so he listens to AcAryAs and bhAgavatAs (devotees) and tries to calibrate himself to be a better person.

Understanding the real goal is very important. Without a clear destination, one may not reach there. SamsAra has been described as blazing fire, bottomless ocean and cobra sitting on the roof. It is an infinite loop of grief and misery. On the other hand, mOksham is eternal happiness and pure bliss. The jIvAtmA who desires to get out of samsara and get an irresistible craving to attain mOksham is called the aspirant (mumukshu). The mumukshu needs to put the knowledge he gained so far into action and pursue towards the goal of the the parama purushArttam; otherwise that knowledge is waste. Knowledge without action is just passage of time. He needs to approach AcAryAs on the path (hitham) and pray for their grace and guidance.

ONE MINUTE – 29

Two roads diverged in a dark wood

And sorry I could not travel both

After gaining a clear knowledge (j~nAnam) on the reality (tattvams), and with the irresistible craving to attain the final objective (purushArttam) of ultimate bliss (mokSham), the aspirant (mumukShu) explores a suitable path (hitham). There two types of aspirants - those who perform prapatti (unconditional total surrender) to attain mOksham are called direct aspirant (svatantra or athvAraka prapatti) and the rest (anga or satvAraka prapatti) who do prapatti for the completion of a part of their bhakthi yOga. For convenience sake we name them as bhakthi yOgis and prapannAs, both do prapatti but for different purpose, though.

Let us say someone climbs the stairs (bhakthi yOga) of empire state building by foot to reach the top, and on the way develops knee pain. He surrenders to Lord to cure the knee pain (anga prapatti). His surrender is only for one part of the total. Once cleared, he continues to climb and reach the top with his own efforts. On the other hand, the other one takes the elevator, and there is absolutely no effort from his part (svatantra prapatti). Both are prapannAs; simply one does as a part of the parcel and the other does it as a total.

svatantra prapatti, path (upAyam) for moksham is executed in two ways – by utterance (ukthi nishtai) or someone else conducts it (AcArya nishtai) for you. In the ukthi nishtai, the chetanA repeats the words told by the AcAryA, though the chEtanA may not know the meaning of each word or mantra; but has a rough idea about surrender and faith in the process and result. Lord with His great compassion accepts that. This is like a small boy says “bhavati bikshAm dEhi” (I am begging for food), gets the food offered by someone, even though the boy does not realize each word and its meaning. Now, in the AcArya nishtai, it gets easier, AcAryA does everything on behalf of the aspirant. So, the aspirant needs to choose one path, ukthi nishtai or AcAryA nishtai and not both. Without either one, a chetanA can’t attain mOksham.

AcAryA can do prapatti, even for birds, animals, and all types of living creatures. Examples are the elephants, cow in the temple and in madam or Asramam. Living in a holy place, staying close to a

SrIvaishNavA, etc. though may not give mOksham directly, but will encourage the chEtanA into good deeds (punyAs) and eventually, he will pursue prapatti and will receive mOksham.

A misconception is that when someone does prapatti, they will die immediately. It is not so. During the prapatti process, the fervent request to Lord is to grant mOksham at the end of the current life (etat dEhAvasAne mam tvat pAdham prapaya svayam) and AzhvAr also claims Lord gives mOksham, if there is a death (maraNam AnAl vaikuntham kodukkum pirAn). It is not Lord gives death immediately (maraNam kottuthu vaikundatham kodukkum).

The reasons to request mOksham at the end of current life and not immediately is to complete their respective duties properly and also enjoy idols (archA perumAL) in temples etc. and do service to devotees (bhAgavata kaimkaryam). That enjoyment may vary across different prapannAs (those who have surrendered) here on earth, but the bliss to be received in mOksham is the same for everyone. There, they can do any type of kaimkaryam that pleases the Lord.

ONE MINUTE – 30

Two roads diverged in a wood,

and I took the one less troubled by

To attain the ultimate reward, mOksham, two types of qualified (adhikAri) people exist, subject to the path (upAyam) they take – bhakthi yOgam (intense devotion) or prapatti (total unconditional surrender). It is implicitly clear that both do prapatti - one for a part (anga prapatti) and other for the whole (svatantra prapatti); both do bhakthi – one as a means and the other as the rewards. Between the two, prapatti is obviously an easier choice for most.

Though both are called upAyam for mOksham, in reality, bhgavAn is the direct and only upAyam. His compassion coupled with the account ledger of infinite merits and sins (punya pApam) of individuals sway them to follow one of these two paths. AcAryAs instruct that Lord SrIman nArAyaNA will not offer a place in shrIvaikuNTham, unless one completes prapatti (prapannAth anyEshAm na disati mukundO nija padham).

Let us compare bhakthi and prapatti as a means for mOksham (mOkshOpAyam), with AEIOU mentioned earlier about the easiness of prapatti.

1. A – all the benfits granted. Both will grant mOksham at completion. Paths are different, but rewards are the same. In addition, Prapatti removes all the hurdles and fulfills all the desires the prapannan has requested. Bhakthi will also yield all the results as Lord krishNA mentioned in Gita that there are four types of people who pray to Him and He fulfills their request.

2. E - easy to implement. prapatti is an instant action (kshaNa kAla kAryam). In bhakthi, several births of intense contemplation (dhyAnam, upAsanA) is needed, that too without even a hairline of interruption

(like thaila dhArai). Prapatti needs no prerequisites. But bhakthi needs karma, j~naNa yogams as the limbs; very hard for common people to follow.

3. I - immediate Results. prapatti assures mOksham at the end of current life. In bhakthi, no way of knowing how many births are needed to complete. The devotee needs to wipe out all of the prArabdha karmA (the bag of sins which has started to yield the results already) through several births. In the last life, when this prArabdha karmA ends, he will remember the Lord at death and will go to mOksham.

4. O – only once done. Prapatti is done only once. The process will be completed in a few moments. bhakathi needs to be performed continuously for several births. In addition, the remembrance of bhagavAn at death bed is not a mandate for prapatti, but a definite requirement for bhakthi.

5. U – universal. Anyone can adopt prapatti. For bhakthi, one needs to be qualified, in their knowledge (j~naNam), energy (sakthi), patience in time, and the caste and gender in which they were born.

maharishIs like vyAsa adopted bhakthi yOgA and in that use prapatti as a limb. They are very capable and willing to tolerate the delay in attaining mOksham and adopted bhakthi yOgam. Their prapatti as a limb (anga prapatti) is for the completion of bhakthi yOgA without any glitch. On the other hand, nAthamuni and ALavandAr did yOgA. They actually did prapatti as a means for mOksham. Their yOgA is the enjoyment of bhagavAn as rewards, and not to be confused as a means to attain mOksham.

Couple of things one needs to be careful while following prapatti. When prapatti is adopted, all other paths need to be completely discarded (for the same reward, in this case for mOksham). You can't go back in the middle to karma, jn~aNa, bhakthi yOgas as an alternate, backup, or emergency situation etc. This is called brammAstra jn~ayam. BrammAstra will cease to be effective, if another missile is used; like what happened to SrI hanumAn when he was tied down in lankA. Similarly, if one adopts another method, prapatti will not yield the result.

In summary, bhagavAn gives mOksham for prapatti route, not because they have something, but because they don't have anything.